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Contents.

	PAGE
Communion with Nature	1
Notes of the Month	2
Christianity a Fire upon the Earth	3
Sunday School Conference	5
Special Services	6
Young People's Page	7
Lesson Notes	8
Reports	10
Human Responsibility To-day	12

N.B.—All Communications should reach the Editor, Ardeevin, Cadogan Park, Belfast, not later than the 16th of the month preceding publication.

Communion with Nature.

The month of July offers to many persons a chance of welcome withdrawal from their ordinary tasks and an opportunity of more intimate contact with Nature. In the country or by the sea they fit themselves into a new environment and prove by experience that such a change makes for mental as well as for physical benefit. Even when the period for recreation is short it is surprising how great the good it may effect. Many persons, engaged in arduous tasks, have been saved from complete exhaustion and collapse by the timely enjoyment of such a change.

If, in many instances, the mere relaxation of effort, and the cessation for a time of routine work, accounts for much of the benefit received on a holiday, there is more in the experience than that. Much depends upon the part which Nature herself plays in the work of recuperation. An old Greek legend comes to our mind suggestively. According to it, the giant Antæus, son of Neptune and Earth, remained invincible so long as he touched his mother Earth. Even the mighty Hercules could not overcome him, provided he maintained contact with the ground. It was only when Hercules realised this that he managed his overthrow by holding him in mid-air, thus breaking the revivifying contact with Earth. Likewise for us, it is the opportunity of re-establishing communication with natural conditions that often makes a holiday so beneficial. We find mental and physical salvation in going back to Nature and allowing her beneficent powers to do their healing work. No less than Antæus in the old legend, we are children of Neptune and Earth, and it is to our irreparable loss when we forget our parentage and surrender ourselves wholly to alien conditions.

There is a further reason for this power of recovery which Nature possesses. The stimulus provided by daily occupation needs something to take its place and counteract it when our task is laid aside. Some find this stimulus in the abnormal satisfaction of the pleasure-loving feelings. This makes for the existence and the success of large seaside resorts. There persons act fully up to the significance of the prize definition of a holiday, viz., as a time when you work harder in spending money than ever you did in earning it. But, after all, that is not the best and certainly not the most beneficial kind of holiday. For the time it may satisfy, but it does not re-create the best powers of mind and body. The more completely we co-operate with Nature, and allow her many agents to do their unforced labours, the better for ourselves. The bracing quality of the sea-breeze, the invigorating effect of salt water, the ever fresh and varied appeal to the eye of trees and flowers and heather—these make for renewal of our jaded powers. Antæus-like, we thus get from contact with Nature new strength for the struggle which duty demands

Notes of the Month

Next month we shall speak of the Royal visit. Writing now on the eve of it we fervently hope there will be nothing to mar the success of the occasion or lessen the full-hearted warmth of the loyal welcome given to our gracious King and Queen

* *

Naturally, much of our space this month is concerned with the Annual Meetings of last month. We are glad of the opportunity of reproducing words which strongly moved us in the hearing and are deserving of careful preservation. In this way a much larger gathering may receive the eloquent and practical appeal made by the ex-Moderator (Rev. G. L. Phelps). We trust that it may have, what it deserves, careful consideration and a ready response. The fact that the Rev. W. G. Tarrant, B.A., was prevented by illness from delivering his lecture personally, robbed the occasion of the Annual Lecture of much of its attraction. But the very closely-reasoned and aptly-phrased production kindly prepared by him and read in his absence should meet with sympathetic and thoughtful attention. The subject of "Human Responsibility" is so important and so timely that it would be difficult to over-estimate its pertinence for all thoughtful minds.

* *

It was as fitting as it was strongly desired that the Rev. Alexander Gordon, M.A., should be our new Moderator. Recently, many of us had joined most heartily in the chorus of congratulation which reached him on the occasion of his 80th birthday. We were reminded not only of the splendid services he had rendered to our community as a whole by his spoken and written words, but we were also as inevitably led to think of his long and living interest in, and attachment to, our cause in the North of Ireland. Consequently, we were impelled to offer him the highest dignity in our power to bestow and we were profoundly thankful that he saw his way to accept the position. We wish him not only a happy and useful year of office but many more years of beneficent activity.

* *

While welcoming the new Moderator we would pay tribute to the old, especially to the exceedingly able manner in which he discharged his onerous duties on the concluding days of his term of office. The fire for which he so eloquently pleaded in the Annual Sermon was present in other forms during our discussions. Then it needed not so much to be coaxed as to be controlled, and it was largely owing to the Moderator's tact that no conflagration resulted. Provided such glowing fervour of expression is wisely disarmed of dangerous tendencies it adds interest and piquancy to debate. We venture to think that a little timely display of it under such fireproof safeguards as obtained last month would serve to bring large and expectant audiences to our annual meetings.

* *

We congratulate the Belfast Branch of the Laymen's League on its happy first appearance among our annual gatherings. Nothing but good can result from such a successful social function as that arranged for June 15th. Members of our different congregations met together in a spirit of warm and cordial cameraderie, partaking of refreshment and listening to excellent musical items. Such speechmaking as there was struck the right note of feeling and good fellowship, and was moreover not too obtrusive. Nor must we overlook the genial and enthusiastic contribution of a London layman, Mr. Frank Colebrook, who made it clear that he heartily believes in the power of the Unitarian faith and its ability to win its widening way. We confidently expect and hope that on all future occasions the Laymen's League will have its honoured place on our programme, and that long before another series of our annual meetings comes round it will have opened other chapters and secured a great increase of members. There is much good work to be done, and if it can continue to enlist the right type of lay workers the Church will have reason to rise up and call it and them blessed.

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1921-23

"Christianity a Fire upon the Earth."

[Abstract of Sermon preached by the Moderator (Rev. G. L. Phelps), in First Church, Belfast, on Tuesday, June 14].

Text: "I came to cast fire upon the earth."—*Luke xii.* 49.

The preacher began by emphasising the place and power of such a service, coming as it did amongst meetings concerned with the transaction of routine business, and not forgetting the peculiar conditions which characterized the human environment in general. Speaking of our country in particular he went on: "It is no use crying 'Peace!' when there is no peace. Look at the deplorable state of this country. Because of the hope which springs eternal in the human breast we speak of the new era which is at present being inaugurated, but only for a small corner of the country does this new era even vaguely promise a better and a happier time, and even those who are determined to use the occasion to the utmost for the general common good know full well in their hearts that something more than a change in the form of government is needed to restore harmony. Bad as are the conditions in Ireland they are by no means unique; throughout the whole world there is a spirit of unrest and a class warfare embittered and intensified by a reckless disregard for the rights and interests of others and a general lowering of moral standards. Neither Capital nor Labour have a monopoly of sins in this respect. The whole world has been greatly impoverished by the enormous non-productive expenditure of the war, yet circumstances have been such as to create an artificial wealth. The inevitable lean years are beginning, but instead of a readiness to share the burden, to put a check upon extravagance and to labour the more industriously to repair the wastage, the tendency seems to be to grab unscrupulously and serve unwillingly. I am purposely pointing out the darkest features in the picture, for though they do not completely fill the canvas there is no denying they are there.

"It is surely not necessary to ask what all this has to do with our Churches. If it is possible for us to carry on our weekly worship and the various other activities of our Churches in utter indifference to the prevailing conditions, if we have no contribution to make towards a solution of the grave problems with which the world is at present faced, then the religion we profess is a mockery and a sham, deserving of the fate which seems at times to threaten it of surviving only as an outworn superstition.

"One of the charges brought by Jesus against the religious leaders of his day was that they did not discern the signs of the times. They went complacently on their way heedless of their real enemies, their religion had become a dull and ineffective conventionality, they rendered homage to the prophets and built them fine sepulchres but knew nothing of their spirit, they cherished a beautiful dream of the golden age to come but were utterly ignorant of the pathway to the realisation of their dream. The past and the future could not help them because they failed to understand the present. Jesus, on the other hand, saw things steadily and saw them whole, did not shut his eyes to any of the enormous difficulties that confronted him, he knew what was in man, he had had personal experience of the hardness and blindness of heart of the professedly religious and of the fickleness of the common people who had heard him gladly, even those good men and true who had left all to follow him were slow of heart to believe and to understand, nevertheless his attitude was not one of indifference or despondency or complacency; the increasing weight of opposition he regarded as a challenge to be joyfully accepted. *'I came to cast fire upon the earth. Would that it were kindled already.'*

"I can conceive of no more heartening or appropriate message to our Churches in the trying circumstances of to-day than this ready acceptance of the challenge to our faith which the world has thrown at our feet. It is as true to-day as when these words were first uttered that discipleship to Jesus is a casting of fire upon the earth."

2588

Indicating some of the signs of the times which were confirmatory of this the preacher made high claims for the Gospel of Christ as an inspiring and enkindling power. Where it had failed to be this it was because it had not been wholeheartedly applied to international, political, industrial, and personal affairs. "The spiritual beauty of Christianity has been acknowledged by the imagination, its intellectual truth has been widely admitted by the mind; what is wanted is that it should set the heart on fire. It was received at first as a gospel, good news which if accepted and confirmed must completely alter man's outlook on the whole of life. Rightly understood it is still good news, and good news which should be especially acceptable at such a time as the present." Dealing with the fallacies of thought which led to and make apologies for war as a biological necessity the preacher dealt vigorously and conclusively with that perverted point of view. "Christianity gives the lie direct to these wretched fallacies, it confidently affirms that love is stronger than hate, that we live in a God-governed world and that men and women are not at the mercy of appetites and passions but are children of God capable of living in harmony with his will. In spite of our religious professions we are much inclined to leave God out of our account in the everyday affairs of life. Not so Jesus, he was not simply the teacher of an exalted and beautiful ethical code, he was primarily a revealer of God. But was his revelation true? Can God be our Father, can he be love, and allow the war to happen and pain and sin to exist? Jesus did not answer this question by argument but by his life. He willingly trod the road that led to the cross, and it was just this seeming failure, this apparent denial of God's love, that brought home to the disciples the truth of his message. 'God so loved the world that he gave his best beloved son.' The Christian Church was born on the day of Pentecost, then it was that the teaching became more than a pious theory, then it was that the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples like cloven tongues of fire. The utmost that the world could do had failed when brought face to face with one who even in the agonies of death trusted in God and forgave his enemies, force was conquered by love, and the dull disciples who had so grievously misunderstood him and deserted him had their eyes opened, and the revelation set their hearts aflame."

Alluding to Nature's appeal to the soul, as felt by Wordsworth, Mr. Phelps argued for the still greater appeal of the words and life of Jesus. "We have tried living by the fallacies of materialism and have been led from disaster to disaster, and all the while there sounds adown the ages the message of the world's salvation, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.' This must cease to be a sort of spiritual luxury for Sunday use only. It must direct and control our thoughts and our actions in every department of life, it must fill us with enthusiasm, it must cast the fire of passion upon the earth." St. Paul at Ephesus put this practical question to the Christian converts: "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" and received as reply the admission: "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." We, as Unitarians, must meet a like test, not by declaring "We do not believe in the Holy Ghost," but by demonstrating its presence and its living force. "There is no distinction between ministers and laity in this respect. By this shall it be known that you are really Christians, that your hearts are aglow with zeal for the kingship of God, that you are even more passionately enthusiastic for those eternal principles and different values set forth by Jesus than you are for your business or your politics, that you are ready and willing to make sacrifices and give of your time and your powers to spreading the light and developing the spirit of sonship to God and brotherhood to man. The road will not be easy nor the burden light, not a triumphal procession but the bearing of a cross. I do not say we shall have crowded churches, I do not say that we shall become popular—not for these things do we exist, but to be witnesses of divine things in all the world, the bearers of glad tidings to a distracted

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people. If we have faith, if we really believe, if we not only possess but are possessed by the Spirit of the Master, then shall we all, ministers and laity, take up our work in our various spheres with better heart and as dedicated spirits, set on fire by the splendour of our stewardship and the greatness of our opportunity so as to feel and say, 'Woe is me if I preach not the gospel.' And the words of the English mystic, slightly altered to suit our circumstances, should be our watchword—

Bring me my bow of burning gold,
Bring me my arrows of desire,
Bring me my spear. O clouds, unfold,
Bring me my chariot of fire.

I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In Ireland's green and pleasant land.

Sunday School Conference

A Layman's Impressions.

A hearty welcome is always assured to any of our gatherings which have the good fortune to be held at Comber, and no exception was made in the first Saturday in June, when the Sunday School Conference descended upon that stronghold of our faith. Good weather and a cordial welcome go far towards attaining the success of the social side of these gatherings. Contingents arrived from near and far to swell the numbers who met upon the lawn of the Meeting-House. Those who never meet from one year's end to another renew old friendships on those occasions over a pleasant cup of tea, when the business of the day is over.

The Moderator, Rev. G. L. Phelps, presided, and, in the absence of the Rev. E. H. Pickering, the duties of Convener were undertaken by the Rev. H. J. Rossington.

Two papers were delivered; the first by the Rev. M. Watkins on "Musical Festivals," dealt in a very practical way with interesting our scholars in the musical side of church work. One gathered from the speaker that this matter has been carefully discussed by the Sunday School Committee and that practical steps are in contemplation to give effect to the plans laid before the meeting for organising, at selected centres, musical festivals in which neighbouring Sunday Schools will take part, stimulating and encouraging each other by coming together for this common purpose. So far as Belfast is concerned there should be no lack of ability for carrying out an excellent festival on these lines, and one hopes that before twelve months have passed we may have our Prize Belfast S.S. Choir. In the country things might be more difficult, but one was glad to hear the scheme receiving praise from some who come from remote districts.

Rev. A. Whitford's paper was more general and dealt with the "Objects of the Sunday School." It conveyed the impression that the aim of the Sunday School was to teach "Christianity" (which the speaker seemed to imply was synonymous with "Good-citizenship") as distinct from "mere denominationalism." The ordinary layman, not being versed in theological niceties, would hardly be inclined to follow the speaker, but would rather agree with Mr. Agnew who, in the discussion which followed the papers, urged that not only should our own special position be placed clearly before the children, but as a necessary corollary, instruction in the history of our Church be given in the classes. Rev. W. G. Marsden opened, and several persons contributed to, the discussion.

An invitation to hold next year's Conference at Killinchy was unanimously accepted.

For common gifts we bless thee, Lord—
The hearing ear, the eye to see,
Beauty forever round us poured
In sweet and varied ministry.

We bless thee for the wholesome air,
For showers that fall and suns that warm,
For darkness, and the truce to care
Sleep brings with many a soothing charm.

Special Services

During the last few weeks there have been in Belfast a number of Special Services: the Annual Service of the Unity Guild, Flower Services at Mountpottinger, at the Mission, and (before these lines are printed) at All Souls' and York Street.

It has struck the writer that there is a certain lack of that good-fellowship which one would like to expect about some of our Ministers in making special events of this character known among their people. For instance, when asked to announce one of the forementioned services one minister replied, in rather too keen a spirit of barter, that he would do so—*provided* he was assured that any similar event in his church calendar would be similarly announced; another one grudgingly replied that he had *so* many announcements for that day! But even these were better than the one who made no announcement at all. Now, surely they forgot that we are all one Church, and that it is impossible for one congregation to flourish without helping along the entire body, and that the Church cannot expect to prosper unless each congregation thrives. One would have thought *in their own interest*—to put it on no higher level—they would have stood by one another without bargaining or complaining.

And what of the laymen? The afternoon services on these occasions are arranged for the special benefit of those who do not wish to miss the ordinary services at their own places of worship, but our laymen were hardly represented in the afternoons at all. Where were the 60 members of the Laymen's League whose object is "to form a bond of union and closer co-operation between the members of the various congregations"? It is no use saying that these Services were not known, for all were advertised in the public press and in some cases by posters sent to the churches for display, besides being announced from the pulpit. Could any further steps have been taken to secure publicity? And yet how few men were sufficiently interested to attend!

And the same thing applies to the Annual Service in connection with the Synod. It was deplorable to see only about 30 persons present. Of these, about one-third were ministers; of the rest perhaps half were men, and of the men only about 3 were members of the League which exists for "vitalizing the work of the churches and thus stimulating the attendance at the services." This service was announced from (presumably) all the pulpits in Belfast, advertised in the morning papers, and the hour of 8 p.m. expressly fixed to enable Belfast men to attend. And that is the result.

The Laymen's League is an excellent institution capable of becoming a real force among our people, but no good will be done until each member realises that he has an individual duty both to his own congregation and to the Church as a whole.

NADIE.

THE SONG AND THE DEED.

There was never a song that was sung by thee,
But a sweeter one was meant to be.

There was never a deed that was grandly done,
But a greater was meant by some earnest one.

For the sweetest voice can never impart
The song that trembles within the heart.

And the brain and hand can never quite do
The thing that the soul has fondly in view.

And hence are the tears and the burden of pain,
For the shining goals are never to gain.

And the real song is ne'er heard by man,
Nor the work ever done for which we plan.

But enough that a God can hear and see
The song and the deed that were meant to be!

—BENJAMIN R. BULKELEY.

Young People's Page.

A Wonderful Clock.

As we are all children of time and interested in the passing of time if not in its proper use, our interest is also to be taken for granted concerning a wonderful clock which for many long years has marked the course of time. On two occasions the writer travelled long distances to see the clock and would like to tell of the impression it made upon his mind.

But, first, a word about the city and building in which the clock is to be found. The city is Strassburg, which as a result of the recent war has again come into the possession of the French. Beautifully situated on the banks of the river Rhine, Strassburg is much visited because of its lovely cathedral. It is in the south transept of this famous building that the clock is to be seen. Every day before twelve o'clock people make their way inside the cathedral and take up their position facing the clock until the hour of twelve arrives.

Ordinary clocks tell the time by hours and minutes. But this not only does that. It also gives the days, weeks and months of the year; marks the movements of the sun, moon and planets, and many other things besides. Let us suppose that we are standing facing the clock a minute or two before twelve noon. There is the clock face, large and round. Above it is a bell, and on each side of the bell the figure of a boy. When each hour arrives one of these figures hits the bell with a mallet, and the other turns over an hour glass.

Again, above the clock face there are other interesting objects. Thus, a large circle marks the motions of the stars and another the changes of the moon. There, too, on a kind of tower is the figure of Father Time, with a bell in one hand and a scythe in the other. Out of a neighbouring tower issue four figures, one for each quarter of an hour, and indicating the four stages of life. The first is a little child, the second a fair youth, the third a grown-up man, and the fourth an old person.

We have just time to note these things, when the hour of twelve has been struck with the blows of the mallet on the bell. Immediately we raise our eyes to another balcony above that on which Father Time is standing. On this upper balcony is a figure which we recognise as that of Jesus. Every day at noon there appear from one side of his figure the figures of the Twelve Apostles. They slowly pass in front of Jesus, doing reverence to him, while each time he raises his hands in blessing. As the last figure of an apostle disappears through a doorway in the opposite side of the tower, the large figure of a cock, which is perched on a pinnacle near by, slowly flaps its wings, and crows three times.

Once more the wonderful performance is over, and we make our way out of the cathedral in the stream of interested persons thinking of the clock and its history. Its making represented the work of its inventor's lifetime. Since then, it has taken over three hundred years to make it as perfect as it is to-day. So complicated is the machinery which produces the movements of the figures that it is said that it was once still for fifty years because no one could be found to set the machinery right. Hundreds of thousands have seen it, and still each day at twelve o'clock that part of the cathedral is crowded as people watch the time told in so ingenious a way. Is it not a marvellous tribute to its maker's skill?

WINDOWS.

The windows of the place wherein I dwell
I will make beautiful. No garish light
Shall enter crudely; but with colors bright
And warm and throbbing I will weave a spell,
In rainbow harmony the theme to tell
Of sage and simple saint and noble knight,
Beggar and king who fought the gallant fight.
These shall transfigure even my poor cell.

Lesson Notes.

[In accordance with the Scheme for 1921, prepared by the Sunday School Committee of the N.S.P.C.I.]

3rd July. A lesson in Mercy. Read Matthew xviii. 21-35. Key Text, Matt. vi. 12.

1. Jesus taught that God is a loving Father, and therefore that He will not be harsh with us, but will be merciful and forgiving if we repent of our sins. But, what is most important, he also taught that we have no right to expect mercy from God unless we are ready to show mercy to our fellow-men. "Blessed are the merciful, for *they* shall obtain mercy."

2. *Peter's question.* Like many others, Peter was willing to forgive—a *little*, but h wanted to know how often he must go on forgiving. He thought himself *very* forgiving to suggest seven times; but Jesus astonished him by saying, "Until seventy times seven," meaning that we must *never* cease forgiving. This seems very, very hard teaching. But there are two things to remember. 1. To forgive does not mean to encourage those who offend us to go on being offensive. To forgive means to give the offender every opportunity that kindness can devise of doing better in the future. If we fail to forgive, and go in for revenge, then we make the offender revengeful. Tit for tat is like a punching ball—the more you hit the ball the more it hits back. 2. We must do our best to be always forgiving, because we ourselves are always committing some fault, and therefore always need God to forgive us.

3. *The unmerciful servant.* This servant besought his lord to forgive him a huge debt, a whole burden of guilt. His lord did so; and then the servant actually refused to forgive a fellow-servant of quite a small thing. In consequence, his lord refused to be merciful to him, and made him suffer the full extremity of what he deserved. When we refuse to forgive, we should always remember what would happen to us if God refused to forgive. Think of the thousands of faults we committed, think of all the blessings God has given us—food, flowers, games, friends, parents, health, etc., for which we are always proving ungrateful! "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." But the unmerciful, *what* shall they receive? One is reminded of Shylock, who refused to be merciful, because he wanted what was due to him. Where would Shylock have been if God had demanded from Shylock what was due to Him, and refused to be merciful?

4. "*From your hearts.*" For elder scholars in particular, it is important to lay stress on these concluding words of verse 35. The forgiveness must be more than a matter of words, or than a mere refraining from revenge. It is not forgiveness unless our intention is really to help the offender to do better by treating him with kindness and consideration.

10th July. A lesson in prayer. Read Matthew vi. 5-15. Key Text, Mark i. 35.

1. *The wrong sort of prayer.* Prayer is wrong: 1. When we pray from the wrong motive, as, for instance, to make folk think that we are very pious. We cannot help sometimes praying in public, as, *e.g.*, in school or church, but that is all show, all pretence, unless we also pray in private. 2. Prayer is wrong when we merely use the words without caring about what they mean. The most beautiful prayer is wrong unless we really mean it.

2. *The right sort of prayer.* Jesus helps us to understand the right sort of prayer by his practice, as we learn from the Key Text, of going away alone to pray. He did not pray to be seen of men: *he prayed because he wished to give out good, and therefore needed to take in good from his Father.* Prayer means coming into touch with God so that He may help us to do what is right. But even the disciples did not quite understand how they ought to pray, and therefore, as we learn from Luke xi. 1, they asked Jesus to teach them to pray.

3. *The Lord's Prayer.* For *elder scholars,* point out that the very fact of Jesus giving us the Lord's Prayer

shows that he had no objection to our using a form of words. A form of words only becomes "vain repetition" when we say it without meaning it. Also the phrase "*Our* Father" (not "*My* Father") shows that he also believed in men praying together as well as in private.

4. *The different parts of the prayer.* 1. "*Our Father.*" By coming to God as our Father and the Father of all mankind we cannot be selfish and ask for selfish things, but only for those good things which will make us all His children. 2. "*Which art in* Heaven." God is everywhere: He is with us on earth; but by thinking of Him as dwelling above all in Heaven, we think far holier thoughts about Him. 3. "*Hallowed be Thy name.*" We should always honour God's name. 4. "*Thy kingdom, etc.*" This means that we wish God to help us to make a heaven on earth. 5. "*Give us this day, etc.*" This reminds us that we depend on God for everything. 6. "*Forgive us our debts (or trespasses) as we also have forgiven our debtors.*" This enforces what we learnt in the last lesson, that we can only ask God to forgive us when we come with a heart that has forgiven others. (See also verses 14 and 15). 7. "*Bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*" This means that we do not wish to show off our virtue, but rather that we acknowledge our weakness, and therefore depend on God to give us a helping hand through life. Those folk who think themselves so clever and strong usually rush into temptation and fall.

17*th July. A lesson in service.* Read Matthew xx. 1-16. Key Text, Matt. xx. 15.

1. *The kingdom of heaven means work.* Those who think of heaven as eternal idleness forget that nothing makes us so miserable, peevish, and selfish as idleness. Heaven above and heaven on earth alike mean that we shall be engaged in bright, happy work. Especially now is work necessary if the world is to be made better. The more generous our work, that is, the more it consists in doing our daily task honestly and in serving others, the happier we shall be.

2. "*Why stand ye here all day idle?*" Many folk are like these labourers. They never think of doing good, noble, and kindly works, *because they are waiting to be asked.* This is lazy and selfish. Our Christian duty is to offer ourselves; there is *always* some kindness to be done. If we truly wish to help, we shall find opportunities close at hand around us.

3. *The payment of the labourers.* Many folk think that it was most unfair of the Master of the vineyard to pay these men all alike, when they had laboured, some all day, others only for an hour. But: 1. The Master gave the grumblers all he had promised them. He had kept his bargain. It was pure envy on their part that made them begrudge the others getting just the same. 2. Those who had only worked one hour had done all they had had an opportunity of doing. 3. All the labourers needed food, clothes, and bed, and therefore all *needed* the full wage, whatever they had earned. If the Master liked to be generous (see the Key Text) what right had any one to grumble? 4. When we are honestly doing our best at work, especially when we are working so as to make the world better and happier, we shall not bother about getting any reward. The true Christian just takes what the Lord is pleased to give. What he offers to all is the joy of the kingdom of heaven. All sorts of work are necessary. Even the humblest has his task to perform. Labourers, as well as kings, are necessary; and because *all* good work is necessary, God makes no distinction between the workers. If everyone does his best to make the world better and happier, according to his abilities and opportunities, he is on the same level as everyone else who has done his best. Therefore Heaven, both here and hereafter, is the reward of all. The work is the main thing. Enjoy doing good work, and you will never bother your head about the pay.

24*th July. Review.*

31*st July. An incident by the way.* Read Luke xix. 1-10. Key text, Luke xix. 10.

General Note.—Luke alone narrates this incident. As is usually the case with all the stories that are peculiar to Luke, it breathes a spirit of broad and tender humanity.

1. *Zacchæus.* He was a publican. This has nothing to do with keeping a public-house. "Publicans" in the New Testament are public officials, tax gatherers in the employment of the Roman Empire. As the strictest Jews were filled with the desire for national independence, they had no love for the Roman Empire, and regarded all its officials as outcasts. Many, however, were willing to be outcasts, because, generally, tax collecting was an easy way to great riches. But the fame of Jesus as the bringer of new light and hope to all had reached the ears of this rich little publican, and he felt an overwhelming desire to see him.

2. *The Sycamore Tree.* Unlike many folk, not only of those, but also of our, times, who are willing enough to receive new light if it means no trouble, Zacchæus perched himself in a sycamore tree, probably endured hours of waiting in order to see the great teacher from Galilee.

3. *Jesus looked up.* He was unexpectedly rewarded. He not only saw Jesus, but Jesus saw him. "God helps them who help themselves." He who seeks for goodness is helped by goodness coming to him. The main thing is to have faith and resolution enough to make an effort. Zacchæus little realised that his conspicuous, though uncomfortable and scarcely dignified, position would mark him out to Jesus as one who truly desires light. At once our Lord's divine heart prompted him to do the right thing. He, a prophet, invited himself to the house of the rich publican, despised of all strict Jews.

4. *The result.* Whilst the bigots outside murmured because Jesus had actually entered the house of a sinner, inside the sinner was so completely converted by the loving sociability of his guest, that he made a great renunciation. Half his goods he would give to the poor, and of the remainder he would give fourfold to all he had wronged. This shows what love and courtesy could do, whilst bigotry and contempt could do nothing. To Jesus Zacchæus was just as much a brother ("a son of Abraham") as his most devoted followers. Besides, he was the very sort of man our Lord came to help. He came "to seek and to save that which was lost." Far more good will be done if we treat those who are despised and hated, with friendliness, than if we turn up our noses at them. The proof of our Christianity is the way we show God's love to all men by our own loving kindness. Many a so-called "bad man" has been won to goodness by a good man treating him just as if he were a brother.

Reports.

Belfast: First Church.—The Sunday School Annual Excursion took place on Saturday, June 11th, the place selected being Whitehead, for which a large party set off by train early in the day. The choice of venue proved a happy one, the weather conditions, at first threatening, improved so much later that sea and sky and coast were seen to the greatest advantage. Many of the younger members of the party were tempted to make closer acquaintance with the sea, and greatly enjoyed the experience, while the less young were content to participate in the delights of paddling by proxy. But one and all had a thoroughly good time and voted the excursion a great success. The arrangements as regards food, so important a feature of the day's programme, were once again entrusted to the Bloomfield Bakery Company. The Superintendent (Mr. Robert M'Crum), the teachers, and many willing helpers, saw to it that the hungry were fed, and that none went away empty. Nor were the energetic and their needs overlooked, since games and some races were provided. No mishap marred the outing, and the return to Belfast concluded a very successful and enjoyable excursion.

Ballee.—The annual general business meeting of the congregation was held in the schoolroom after divine worship

on the 8th ult., Rev. J. H. Bibby, minister, presiding over a good attendance. Mr. Robert M'Cullen, M.INST.M.E., hon. treasurer, presented the financial statement, which showed a substantial increase, both as regards stipend and quarterly silver collections. Following the formal adoption of the accounts, Mr. Robert Cavan was re-elected as hon. secretary, and Mr. Robert M'Cullen again appointed hon. treasurer, and it was further decided that the personnel of the Congregational School Committees remain unchanged. The Chairman expressed the continued indebtedness of the congregation to their officers and to the hon. treasurer for efficient services also so ungrudgingly given as their hon. organist for now over twenty years, Mr. Hugh M'Mechan and Mr. John D. Stitt associating themselves in grateful appreciation. It was unanimously resolved to officially place on record the unbounded satisfaction of the congregation at the recent decision of their minister withdrawing his resignation and consenting to remain with them, and the hope was expressed that he might long be spared to minister to a people in whose hearts he has long since found an abiding place of affection, ever deepening with the passing years.

Belfast: Domestic Mission.—The first picnic ramble of the season took place on Saturday, May 14th, when a most enjoyable time was spent on the Cave Hill.—On Sunday, May 29th, the Children's Anniversary and Flower Services were conducted, the special preachers for the day being the Revs. M. Watkins, E. H. Pickering, M.A., and G. Leonard Phelps. Owing to the somewhat disturbed state of the locality, following upon the elections, our congregations were rather smaller than one would have wished. A number of specially selected hymns and choruses were tastefully rendered by the combined scholars and Mission choir, while Sir John Bowring's hymn " In the cross of Christ I glory " in anthem setting, was also effectively rendered.—Continuation services were held on Sunday, June 5th, conducted morning and evening by Mr. A. L. Agnew, B.A., and in the afternoon by Rev. H. J. Rossington, M.A., B.D. Good congregations assembled at each of these services. We were greatly encouraged by the attendance of friends from the local churches. The singing was splendid, the various hymns being rendered with considerable feeling, while we were particularly charmed by the manner in which the scholars sang their solos and choruses. We realise to the full the tremendous help derived from the training in connection with the recent musical competitions, the local accent, which is so objectionable in choir singing, is gradually, but surely, being eliminated. On each occasion the church was suitably decorated, and we would convey our best thanks to those friends who contributed so liberally to this end. The flowers were taken later to the Belfast Charitable Institution. The collections for the two Sundays amounted to a little over £6, a portion of which is being devoted to the cost of an outing for the combined choirs. From services of this nature considerable help and encouragement is derived. One very important feature is that members of our churches are brought more intimately in touch with a section of the work conducted in the Mission. We most heartily welcome the attendance of our friends, not only on occasions of this kind, but also at our weekly services. By such acts of practical, kindly sympathy our Mission congregation will realise that they do belong to an institution of our Church in which its members are sympathetically and actively interested.

Downpatrick.—The children of Hollymount Unitarian Sunday School had a very jolly pic-nic on Thursday, 9th June, in a field kindly lent for the occasion by Mrs. Richey. The tea arrangements were made by Mrs. Philipson, assisted by Mrs. Martin and Miss Moffett. Mrs. Thomas Huddleston generously sent a large tin of sweets.

Mountpottinger.—The annual Floral Services were held on June 12th, when in spite of the inconvenience caused to many of our friends by the suspension of trams arising out of the coal shortage, the services were well attended. In

the morning the pulpit was occupied by the resident Minister, and for the afternoon and evening services, we were favoured with the presence of the Moderator (Rev. G. L. Phelps), whose discourses met with much approval. We were pleased to have this opportunity of hearing Mr. Phelps, in view of his impending departure for the Manchester district. As is customary the church was nicely decorated, and we have to thank Miss Davidson, Mrs. Johnson, and Miss Evans, who were the leading spirits in this connection. At the same time we are not unmindful of the kindness of friends which made it possible for their labours to have such satisfactory results. The soloist at the afternoon service was Miss A. Newman, whose sweet voice was not impaired by the slight trace of nervousness discernible. The Sub-Committee appointed to go into the matter of church and school decoration have made their report to the general committee, and estimates have been inquired for, and will be considered with a view to putting the work in hand at an early date. The small supplementary sale of work held on June 1st produced an acceptable little addition to the bazaar accounts.

Laymen's League.—A very successful innovation was made this year at our Church Meetings by the introduction of an informal social gathering under the auspices of the Laymen's League. Invitations had been issued to the clergy, the members and their ladies, quite a large number of whom assembled to enjoy the tea and programme which were provided. We are grateful to Miss S. Bodell, Miss L. V. Gordon, Rev. M. Watkins and Mr. I. M'Crum, for the musical items which they so kindly supplied, and to Mr. F. Colebrook for the cheery words of greeting he conveyed to the meeting from the Highgate Chapter. In all an hour and a half was spent in pleasant social intercourse, and the gathering was undoubtedly the best attended function in connection with this year's Meetings. One looks far forward to the League undertaking something on an even larger scale next year, and one wonders whether it would not be possible for it to revive the Garden Party.

Human Responsibility To-day

[The Annual Lecture prepared by the Rev. W. G. Tarrant, B A., London, at the invitation of the General Synod. Owing to indisposition Mr. Tarrant was unable to be present, but kindly sent on his MS., and this was read on June 15 by the Rev. H. J. Rossington].

The immense *practical* importance of the subject of Human Responsibility needs no emphasis among persons who realise the fact, which whether realised or not is certain, that the only way to improvement in our social and political situation lies in the direction of moral reform, a clearer sense of duty, and steadier will to perform it. Still less need this practical importance be emphasised among those who are bound together in an attempt to render more effective that Christianity which they believe to be capable of producing greatest results in personal life, and thus in the life of the community. There may, indeed, be intense moral enthusiasm where religion, as ordinarily conceived, has ceased to be a vital interest, just as there may but too frequently be a type of religious culture which is not distinguished by a passion for the right. But where religion is felt to be nothing if it does not generate ardour in the discharge of duty and in the endeavour to rescue mankind from the worst possible miseries, not in some distant world but here and now, there will be eagerness to take counsel upon this subject, if by any means such redemptive work may proceed with new energy and with a clearer light upon its essential character.

All our practice, however, is based on *theory*, explicit or tacitly assumed, and it cannot be denied that the theory that human beings are *responsible* beings has always hitherto underlain political and civil life, as well as Church life. Whatever may have been the course of man's development on the mental and spiritual side, it is certain that a deepening sense of responsibility has marked its progress. "Ethics" have been transformed more and more during the ages, losing the character of the merely customary which it would be uncomfortable not to support, and becoming fused with a sense of "moral" requirements, with

sanctions far higher than those involving personal or social inconvenience. It is worthy of note, as showing the significance of this feature in human unfoldings, that the heightening and deepening of which I speak is common to all the more influential stages in the world's history. That the ancient Hebrew was increasingly aware of the inherent principle of obligation is not more obvious to the student than that the Egyptian and Mesopotamian experienced the same enlightening. Turning from Asia to Europe, we are arrested by the spectacle of Greek philosophy on the one hand, and of Roman organisation and polity on the other; and, while the final edification of Roman Law took place in an empire which had embraced Christianity, the bulk of its enactments were undoubtedly based on principles established long before the new religion exercised a moulding influence on the science of government, we may even say before the new religion had birth. In taking over this legal system from their predecessors, the Christian jurists certainly were not acting in a merely mechanical way. They justly discerned that at the root of the system lay this all-important principle, viz., that a man is accountable for his actions and must expect treatment accordingly. What the new religion had to teach on the subject was mostly by way of elucidating (as was thought) the origins out of which this singularly endowed nature of ours had sprung, exhibiting the history of its degeneration and the provision made for its recovery, and declaring the quite unspeakable horrors awaiting those who refused the proffered plan of salvation. Judge as we may of the validity and the value of this Christian addition to the old theory, so massively embodied in the Code of the Laws, it is clear that, so far from weakening the appeal to men's sense of their moral responsibility, its purpose—and in many cases its result—was to make that appeal only the more effective. I need not attempt to illustrate by quotations the profounder type of the moral changes brought about under Christian influences; they are far from exhausting their possibilities even yet, being too often as yet confined to a relatively small number of choice souls. But whether with few or many, in church culture and fellowship, or in the ordinary civilised life of the community, we see the widest and most impressive evidence that the one indispensable and abiding principle for a really *human* life is an insistence on human responsibility.

But this theory, which long before this time should have led to a much higher moral practice in the world, has been, like many others, opposed and subjected to considerations and influences which, if not guarded against, go far towards undermining it; and these inimical tendencies are specially active in our generation. Natural propensities were never more vigorous, never more catered for. Under the mask of a love of liberty there exists an unprecedented hatred of control, a disdain of discipline. One of the Judges, sitting in a London Court, recently spoke of a wretched woman, who had met her death, as one who apparently followed "unreservedly" the drift of her desires and inclinations. It must be feared that her case is not alone, and the amount of "reserve" following upon any thought of responsibility is in multitudes of cases probably very small indeed. To track all the sources of this so widely prevailing disposition is beyond our scope at this time; but one is moved to ask whether the Churches have not been sadly deficient in the sense of their responsibility for the education of the conscience of the people.

One may, perhaps, go further and inquire whether the revulsion of some finer spirits against the traditional teachings concerning "sin" and its "penalty" may not, unless carefully watched, tend to impair a wholesome dread of violating the precepts of duty towards God and man. The shocking disparity between a creature's ill-doings during three-score years and ten on this earth, or indeed during a mere fraction of that period, and his so-called "punishment" in frightful agonies to all eternity, has in our day revolted the minds of all who are not bound absolutely by the dogmas of the past. Unitarians have been foremost in protest, and in voicing a nobler con-

ception of God's ways with the souls who are "all" his; and, we rejoice to know, there are many others who in different communions stand for the same ideals. The question that remains to be solved by the experience of the future is whether a Christianity based on the larger Hope will effectively reign in the turbulent elements in the life of the people at large, or whether by removal of "the hangman's whip" restraint will not more and more disappear. To proclaim the Love of God in such a way as to weaken the sense of duty is worse than a mistake—it is itself a sin against his truth who is not only the Beauty of the whole world, but its Righteousness as well.

More directly disastrous to a vigorous and operative sense of responsibility, however, if not in fact at once destructive of such a sense in any form, has been much of the scientific study and discovery of the last few decades. This has led some powerful writers, if not equally powerful thinkers, to give a new turn to that debate which has long fascinated theologians and philosophers, viz., on *Necessity* v. *Freedom*. Now it is a remarkable fact that some of the most resolute defenders of the *determinist* principle in past ages have shown themselves fully as eager as *libertarians* to fight for morals—the Dutch and Scottish Calvinists are outstanding examples; and in some way they have been able to satisfy themselves in contemplating the severest conceivable "punishment" of sinners who, apparently, could be nothing else. But the best logicians sometimes fail in their logic, at least as it appears to others; and Christians may be thankful that indifferent doctrines do not invariably counteract the gracious influences, far other than intellectual, by which life is practically guided. One might, perhaps, venture a hope that the modern determinists may escape the moral perils which must surely beset minds of their class, if indeed they are as thorough-going as their case not only permits but demands; but between them and their theological predecessors there is an all-important difference. The Calvinist theory started from the fundamental assumption of a *Moral Creator*, within whose world the claims of righteousness were paramount, and whose dealings with his creatures must before all things be just. The new school of Scientific Determinism knows no such Being; and it can hardly be expected —even if it were on other grounds possible—that, in a world destitute of moral principle in its groundwork, there must be a place for such a principle in the nature of its human inhabitants.

We note, of course, that of late the creed of unadulterated *Materialism* has been less boldly advanced, and with good reason; for the "matter" which was at one time regarded as the one final reality, the unanalysable ultimate, has dissolved under radio-active tests into a marvellously varied cloud of constituent elements of "pure force" (as we have been informed). But the mystery of the universe is doubtless open to research much farther, not to say *ad infinitum*. If a certain mitigation has therefore overcome the raw audacity of assertion that once characterised a section of the scientific world, there has been, however, no weakening at all of the case against that human freedom which is the postulate of human responsibility. Granted that "matter" is startlingly protean, not to say evanescent, the law of Action and Reaction remains inviolable. All physical manifestations by what we call a "man," including the clenching of his fist, the turn of his eye, the flexures of his tongue, are (on this theory) no less involuntary, in the last resort, than the activities of the valves of his heart or the secretions of his papillary glands. And if you say that in the case of one set of actions an added factor is transmitted from the brain, changing the involuntary to the voluntary, you are missing the secret of the brain's own operation. No change *there* (so the argument continues) but takes place solely as a consequent of antecedent conditions. For so much force received the brain returns a just and exact equivalent, and tho' the working of the machine is attended by such "epiphenomena" as thoughts and feelings, it not only could, but would, go on in their absence, just as an engine goes

on working (provided the right arrangements have been made) whether in the dark or the light. As to the man-made engine, the arrangements may be occasionally at fault for the purposes in hand; but in this universe they are strict, adequate, all-inclusive. "Where," we are challenged, " is any hiatus in the chain of antecedent and consequent into which human agency—in the sense of free choice and direction—can intrude?

Now I suspect the student of these things will not be overmuch impressed by this or any other form of argument that would reduce all our life to a curious play of automata; with the actual crowded world in mind he will have little apprehension that the bulk of men will accept any such view. And if he thinks specially of the schools of philosophy it is easy to imagine a *reductio ad absurdum*. When the advocate of such a view of human nature is found to be just as adverse to its practical application as the rest of us, himself appealing for our verdict on his own case precisely as if instead of being machines we were rational beings, capable of estimating evidence and in honour bound to accept that which appears most just and true, he really must excuse us from taking him too seriously. While it is true that much which he adduces has weight, and that to maintain the opposite to his case is by no means without difficulty, it is obviously just as certain that to live the life of *human* fellowship and engage in the search for the reality of things is quite impossible on the assumption of our life being a mere mechanism.

We may pass, therefore, to a much more novel and a much more serious consideration. The physicist may have little or no terror for us, but the *psychologist's* entry is critical for our cause. Having in recent years explored the rise and variation of mental activities in what we know as the personal life, and having (as many believe) discovered through the abnormalities of mind much that is hidden in the normal, he is ready to point out the many pitfalls in the path of our moral judgments. He informs us that the mind floats like an iceberg on its path, by far the greater part hidden below the surface. Unknown to the individual himself, unsuspected by his companions, processes of storing up and transforming what has been experienced, and of ripening the unconscious tendencies till they come to full fruition in startling ways and actions, are constantly going on within each one. The saying " To know all would be to pardon all " acquires added cogency in view of these revelations of " personality." Men have long, indeed, perceived an undoubted risk of imputing a fictitious degree of moral potentiality to all alike, and have modified their expectancies of human behaviour in accordance with more reasonable inferences from facts observed. And who will doubt that while we, " being evil," have thus learned to discriminate and make allowance, the Father and Judge of all knows our frame, mental as well as corporeal, and is absolutely just toward our imperfections? The words of poor Robert Burns recur to our memory:

> Thou knowest thou hast formed me
> With passions wild and strong,
> And listening to their witching voice
> Has often led me wrong.

And again:

> What's done we partly may compute,
> We know not what's resisted.

Sometimes the heart, recalling these things, is filled with pity for humankind too often a stranger there. In such moods, however, there occurs the danger of falling into mere sentimentalism, a risk of turning religion into a cloudscape, delicious but delusive, affording no sure footing for wayfaring men, let alone a King's Highway for a conquering army's advance against " old chaos and the dark." The mind in such emergencies must rally itself upon the solid ground afforded by daily experience; a man must consider whither his too noble generosities may lead him.

May I, by way of illustration, refer to an incident in my own experience in which this principle of responsibility was concerned. It was my good fortune some years ago to form the acquaintance of a certain Admiral who bore an honoured name, not less honourable in his own career, then about to close. My

old friend was a man of lofty piety and unusually wide benevolence, and one of his troubles was that men like myself did not exhibit more tender sympathy with the sin-stained multitudes. That he may have had quite enough ground for alleging such a defect I will not question, but when he proceeded to say, "Tarrant, you should tell the workingmen of Battersea that they are not responsible for their faults and vices; these are entirely due to their physical nature, in which each soul is a pure and innocent thing imprisoned in a net," it seemed I could only meet such a suggestion by an *argumentum ad hominen*. "Sir George," I said, "when you were still with your ship, did you speak that way to any of the crew who had neglected his duty?" It was interesting, if from the purely dramatic point of view alone, to see how "all the sailor" in him sprang up at once to repudiate his Manicheist philosophy, as soon as it was thus subjected to the test of practical life. "Oh, no!" he replied, "*discipline must be maintained.*"

Does not this "must" shatter irretrievably not only such well-meant but ill-considered proposals as his, but on the other hand every theory that would do away with a real element, however carefully estimated, of personal responsibility in man? If the ship of State is to voyage prosperously and not come to irreparable wreck and ruin every member of its crew, from the highest office down to the humblest seaman, must *fulfil his duty*. The thing is beyond question when any compact unity is considered—a crew, a battalion, even a commercial union. Without the fundamental assumption that a man can and will be loyal to the call made upon him as a member of such a corporation it would be foolish to proceed. The admission must be made, however, that when the compacter forms of association are no longer in view but the community as a whole, whether city, county or nation, the strength of the pull of duty is apt to diminish. As a race we are far from the stage when the oneness of our respective nations, not to speak of the whole family of nations, is so felt by people generally that their sense of personal loyalty to the State compares at all with that of smaller combinations. There would seem to be, unfortunately, some dissolvent tendency introduced upon the moral integrity of many persons as soon as they exchange service with an individual employer for a position with a large corporation or State department. Men who would shrink from defrauding the private employer seem to feel little or no scruple about appropriating the property of a great firm; while the peculation current in Government establishments is reported to be very extensive, in spite of a system of inspection devised to make up for the lack of personal honesty. It is increasingly obvious to all thoughtful observers that however efficient such a system of inspection can be made it is a very poor substitute for the moral uprightness of the persons inspected; let them drift into the assumption that the only thing to avoid is being found out, and there is no measuring the losses both in monetary value and in type of personality which must ensue. From time to time, indeed, those who place their trust in external checks and supervision receive fresh cause to exclaim "*Quis custodiet custodes?*"

[To be continued

MEMORIES.

Oft I remember those whom I have known
In other days, to whom my heart was led
As by a magnet, and who are not dead
But absent, and their memories o'ergrown
With other thoughts and troubles of my own,
As graves with grasses are, and at their head
The stone with moss and lichens so o'erspread.
Nothing is legible but the name alone.
And is it so with them? After long years,
Do they remember me in the same way,
And is the memory pleasant as to me?
I fear to ask; yet wherefore are my fears?
Pleasures, like flowers, may wither and decay,
And yet the root perennial may be.

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